

Senate Bill 166  
January 25, 2007  
Presented by Jeff Hagener  
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Jeff Hagener, Director of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

Fishing and hunting are important recreational activities for the citizens of Montana. In addition to providing hundreds of thousands of days of recreation, food for the table and substantial economic benefits, fishing and hunting provide quality family time and lasting memories. Studies show that family fishing and hunting trips greatly increase the probability that a young person will become a life-long angler or hunter.

Governor Brian Schweitzer wants to increase the opportunity for families to participate in fishing and hunting. SB 166 would contribute to this effort by providing free conservation licenses to youth aged 12 to 15 and to senior citizens over 62. With a conservation license, youth and senior citizens can fish and hunt upland birds, other than turkey. If these individuals wanted to hunt other species, they would need to obtain other licenses and pay the hunter access enhancement fees.

Governor Schweitzer also wants to honor the service of our wounded military personnel by providing purple heart recipients who purchase a conservation license free privileges to fish and hunt upland birds, excluding turkey regardless of age. This is the same provision that is included in SB 112, passed earlier this session by this committee.

To minimize any adverse impact on the general license account as a result of issuing free licenses or privileges, SB 166 includes provisions to reimburse the general license account from the general fund. There are two important differences between the reimbursement for youth and senior citizens and reimbursements for military personnel. The maximum amount of the reimbursement for youth and senior citizen licenses is capped, and the sections providing the free licenses and reimbursements for youth and senior citizens terminate at the end of the upcoming biennium.

SB 166 seeks to get more families afield and initiate a passion for angling and hunting in some young Montanans. It will also provide free hunting privileges to our wounded veterans. FWP urges your support for SB 166.